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To Whom It May Concern:

You requested an outline of my life in a Jehovah's Witness family and the consequences of leaving that group. Here it is:

When I was still a baby my parents, recent immigrants to Canada, became Jehovah's Witnesses. So my first 28 years were with Jehovah's Witness teachings and lifestyle. I came from a close knit family of two loving parents, three siblings. We went to five meetings a week at the Kingdom Hall. One evening a week we studied a Watchtower publication together as a family. At breakfast time whenever the whole family was together (mostly weekends) we would have a short discussion of another Watchtower publication. On Saturday morning we went as a family out in field service (door to door selling Watchtower and Awake magazines and other Watchtower publications). I started to sell these publications myself at the age of 9. At the Kingdom Hall meetings all children were encouraged to view full time work for the Watchtower as a career. We were encouraged to develop a skill that would enable us to work part time to afford living expenses and then to spend 90 hours a month going door to door and studying Watchtower publications with those who showed an interest. The pressure was strong throughout childhood to become full time workers for the Watchtower.

Consider what you are doing in discharging your responsibility toward those who still are not approved servants of Jehovah. Their lives are in grave danger at the fast-approaching "great tribulation." Are you responding to their urgent need for help? Are your circumstances such that you could make adjustments in your routine of life to enable you to share to a greater extent in the vital warning and rescue work that will be ending soon? ...Would this concluding period of the "last days" not be an appropriate time for intensified activity? We do not want to have a charge of bloodguilt leveled against us because of having been indifferent to the critical situation of people in our territory. ... This is certainly no time to be distracted by a desire to get comfortably situated in the world or by undue anxiety over making a living. **Our Kingdom Ministry** September 1974 p.5

Must you be a pioneer in order to be whole-souled in your service? ... Whole-souled service means you are doing *all* you can in God's service. ... The apostle Paul, himself a full-time preacher ... felt so strongly about his responsibilities that he said: "Woe is me if I did not declare the good news!" -- 1Cor.9:16. ... Every young person ought to give serious consideration to this field of service. When he completes his years of required secular education, what is he going to do with his life? ... In answer to that question ...in the case of one who is dedicated and is baptized "there should be no doubt." **Our Kingdom Service** September 1981 pp.1,3

Loyal youths share in congregation meetings, as well as in the field ministry. ... Increasing numbers of young ones are rejecting high-paying jobs or higher education in favor of a career in the ministry. **Our Kingdom Ministry** September 1982 p.3

Children should be trained at a *very early* age to accompany their parents in the field ministry. **Our Kingdom Ministry** July 1982 p.4

If you are a young person, you also need to face the fact that you will never grow old in this present system of things. Why not? Because all the evidence in fulfillment of Bible prophecy indicates that this corrupt system is due to end in a few years. Of the generation that observed the beginning of the "last days" in 1914, Jesus foretold: "This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." -- Matt. 24:34. Therefore, as a young person, you will never fulfill any career that this system offers. If you are in high school and thinking about a college education, it means at least four, perhaps even six or eight more years to graduate into a specialized career. But where will this system of things be by that time? It will be well on the way toward its finish, if not actually gone! With such practical trades, many young persons have been able to sustain themselves with part-time work. This allows them to spend much more of their time helping interested persons to learn God's requirements for life by studying the Bible with them. True, those who do not understand where we are in the stream of time from God's viewpoint will call this impractical. But which is really practical: preparing yourself for a position in this world that will soon pass away? or working toward surviving this system's end and enjoying eternal life in God's righteous new order? **Awake!** May 22, 1969 p.15

My goal became to be a pioneer (full time worker for the Watchtower -- without pay -- the Watchtower had no paid workers). At the same time I grew up thinking I would unlikely see that goal fulfilled, because the end of the world would happen before I left school (I am now 37 years old). I attended public and high school and was an average student. Secular education never seemed very important. It served only to get basic skills and a useable skill for a part time job. Outside of Watchtower literature I read very little, only that required in school. Being a Jehovah's Witness gives a very different world view. Pessimistic. The END OF THE WORLD always was NEAR!

... within relatively few years we will witness the fulfillment of the remaining prophecies that have to do with the

"time of the end." ... a brief period of years at the most separates us from the great windup of this old system ...
Awake! October 8, 1966 pp.19,20

The immediate future is certain to be filled with climactic events, for this old system is nearing its complete end. Within a few years at the most the final parts of Bible prophecy relative to these "last days" will undergo fulfillment

Watchtower May 1, 1968 p.272

... time is rapidly running out for this wicked system of things. It is very close to plunging into the chasm of Armageddon. **Awake!** October 8, 1968 p.29

There is only a short time left before Jehovah will destroy this wicked system of things. **Watchtower** January 15, 1969 p.39

... the end is very near ... the remaining time is very short. **Watchtower** July 15, 1976 pp.441,443

What is the point of education in literature, history, *anything*? I enjoyed English and Art classes but pursued business courses (which I loathed), for they would enable me to work as a secretary part-time on leaving school. I now enjoy reading and feel 20 years behind in my education. All through my school years I was excused from the class for the national anthem (which the Watchtower views as *worship* instead of *respect* for one's country) and the Lord's prayer. I was also excused from any activities related to ALL holidays and never attended social events (e.g. dances, sports) or extra curriculum. The Watchtower organization discourages friendships outside of other Jehovah's Witnesses, so friendships at school were kept to a minimum and rarely did any of my schoolmates come to my home or I to theirs. I was the first of my parents' children to finish grade 12; both my older siblings finished at grade 11.

We all pioneered for a time. My older brother until he married and started a family. My sister till she was expecting her first child and then again when her first two children started school. I pioneered upon leaving high school and continued until I was married and found it too tiring to be a wife, hold a part time job and devote 90 hours in field service. I cut back to devoting an average of 30 hours a month (feeling guilty because I did not have the energy to do more). My husband David and I made the decision not to have any children because we believed the end of the world was just around the corner and we should devote all our energy to doing as much as we could to save others. We believed we could have our family later -- when God's "new system of things" (paradise on earth) became a reality. The Watchtower was very much the centre of my life. All my decisions were made with the Watchtower's teachings and instructions in mind: education, career, marriage partner, family planning were all affected by advice like the following:

Today there is a great crowd of people who are confident that a destruction of even greater magnitude is now imminent. The evidence is that Jesus' prophecy will shortly have a major fulfillment, upon this entire system of things. This has been a major factor in influencing many couples to decide not to have children at this time. They have chosen to remain childless so that they would be less encumbered to carry out the instructions of Jesus Christ to preach the good news of God's kingdom earth wide before the end of this system comes. -- Matt. 24:14.

Awake! November 8, 1974 p.11

... the matter of childbearing in this time of the end is a personal one that each couple must decide for itself. However, since "the time left is reduced," married couples would do well to weigh carefully and prayerfully the pros and cons of childbearing in these times. ... this is not the ideal time to bring children into the world. **Watchtower** March 1, 1988 p.26

For as long as I can remember my father had been saying (probably weekly) in my hearing "Well it can't be very long now -- no more than a couple of years before the end will come."

Although I was unaware at the time, I now believe being a Jehovah's Witness gave me an inferiority complex and made me rather high strung and nervous. All *thinking* was done for me -- I merely parroted what the Watchtower taught. Everyone was expected to believe *exactly the same* about every issue. You could not hold or voice a different opinion than the organization. There are only two sides in the world according to the Watchtower -- God's (equivalent to the "organization") and Satan's (everyone else religious and non-religious). No one else has *the truth*. No one else *knows* God or is *loved* by God other than Jehovah's Witnesses. Everyone not in the organization will be destroyed at Armageddon, including ex-Jehovah's Witnesses who leave the organization:

The influence and spirit of this world is to get ahead, to make a name for oneself. Many schools now have student counselors who encourage one to pursue higher education after high school, to pursue a career with a future in this system of things. Do not be influenced by them. Do not let them "brainwash" you with the Devil's propaganda to get ahead, to make something of yourself in this world. This world has very little time left! Any "future" this world offers is no future! Wisely, then, let God's Word influence you in selecting a course that will result in your protection and blessing. Make pioneer service, the full-time ministry, with the possibility of Bethel or missionary service your goal. This is a life that offers an everlasting future! **Watchtower** March 15, 1969 p.171

The clergy are part of Satan's world. (John 8:44) But it is a world that God will soon crush out of existence.

Watchtower February 1, 1990 p.25

The obligation to hate lawlessness also applies to all activity by apostates. Our attitude toward apostates should be that of David, who declared: "Do I not hate those who are intensely hating you, O Jehovah, and do I not feel a loathing for those revolting against you? With a complete hatred I do hate them. They have become to me real enemies." (Psalm 139:21,22) Modern-day apostates have made common cause with "the man of lawlessness," the clergy of Christendom. ... Apostates capitalize on errors or seeming mistakes made by brothers who take the lead. Our safety lies in avoiding apostate propaganda as though it were poison, which in fact it is. **Watchtower** July 15, 1992 p.12

I sincerely believed this was God's organization until around 1987. My heart and mind were fully convinced and set on a future paradise coming to the earth. In 1986 my husband resigned as an elder and stopped attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall due to difficult challenges raised by people we had been trying to recruit. These challenges were about the Watchtower's credibility and authority. In an effort to regain my husband to loyalty to the Watchtower organization I began researching the Watchtower organization's history. I started reading original materials of the founder and the various presidents. I had never done this before, nor was I encouraged to. The history of the Watchtower was frequently presented in current literature and I had always believed it to be accurate and honest. They told me to be honest, and I assumed they were. We were told not to read outside the Watchtower publications, which means Jehovah's Witnesses must trust the Watchtower **completely** for their knowledge.

... in Jehovah's organization it is not necessary to spend a lot of time and energy in research, for there are brothers in the organization who are assigned to do that very thing, **Watchtower** June 1, 1967 p.338

I entered into this research confident of getting satisfying answers to meet all challenges raised. My research not only confirmed the truth of the allegations but unearthed additional problems. I cannot express how shattering this was to me. For months I felt a sinking dread, then disillusionment, then hurt and betrayal. Also I was *afraid*. To whom could I talk? Who would listen? Who would believe me? It was too explosive to present to my family. I was constantly in fear of confrontations about David's departure. I feared we would be disfellowshipped. My waking hours were a nightmare. Sleep was a refuge. I went into depression. In a desperate effort to communicate these serious concerns to my family and our friends in the Watchtower, David and I put together 200+ pages of research, quoting directly Watchtower publications and the Watchtower's translation of the Bible. Within weeks after two members of my family received the information, we were *disfellowshipped* for apostasy. We were never formally charged before our expulsion.

Once we were disfellowshipped all contacts with my family and friends in the organization were severed. I cried myself to sleep every night for a year. My whole world had fallen apart. I no longer had a past. David and I had to start life again -- at ages 38 and 28.

Sincerely,

Vivian Aspinall